



DuPage
Federation
on Human Services Reform

CENSUS 2020



Population-Specific Barriers and Motivating Messages

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Why does the Census matter?

In this age of digital overwhelm, it's extremely easy to tune out or be hyper-focused on our own small piece of the world. Getting people to care about the census presents its own unique set of challenges due to a whirlwind of misinformation, fear, and negative media coverage.

The good news is, there has been a fair amount of research into what resonates most across the "Hard to Count" (HTC) populations. By understanding the concerns and objections to the census that weigh heavy on the minds of these groups, we can begin to address their concerns in a positive and productive manner. Positivity, by the way, has been found to be a key tool in engaging with HTC's and constituents, and positive messaging tests far better than messaging based on fear and anxiety. (1)

Research has shown, that the messaging that resonates most with HTC's is:

The Census benefits to the community.

The census decides over \$675 billion in federal funding each year. Demonstrating how that benefit translates to the state, county, city and even neighborhood is critical in encouraging responsiveness to the census.

Crafting a message similar to the following, increases HTC responsiveness:

"Census data is critical to our families' futures. It helps us get healthcare, transportation, schools, affordable housing, and higher education that our families need to get a good start and be successful." (1)

You can tweak your messaging based on your knowledge of the audience and the local area. (1)

"The 2010 Census shows that in one major city, the Asian American community had doubled in the previous ten years. This led to a \$50 million increase in federal funding for schools, hospitals, and services for our kids. Filling out the Census can have real benefits for our community."(1)



Why does the Census matter?

Claiming Power

Another set of messaging that tests really well is based on historically disenfranchised groups claiming power. For example, that messaging might look something like this:

“Completing the Census is an act of resistance and an opportunity to show our community’s power.” (2)

Crafting messages in this vein are about making your constituents feel empowered. There is an act of defiance in standing up, being counted, and making your voice heard. You can draw upon long legacies of activism and community planning to inspire hope. (This will come up again as we delve into the specifics of reaching Hard to Count populations.)

Talking about the benefit to the community and claiming power are both powerful tools in creating census engagement. However, there are more specific concerns that must be addressed, that we’ll turn to now.



Barriers to Census Engagement

Barriers to Census Engagement

There are four common objections to the census, across all populations, not just the hard to count. (3) They consist of:

- “I do not trust the government with my information.”
- “I do not think the census has any impact on my life.”
- “I have trouble completing census forms.”
- “I do not have time to fill out the census forms.”

Building Trust

“I do not trust the government with my information.”

Confidentiality is a core concern with with this particular group of people. They may have had a bad experience with identity theft (or live in fear of it). Others may be concerned about being “put on a list”. This may be an especially concerning issue with Latinx communities or African American groups (see “Who are the Hard to Count” section for more on this), due to fear of immigration or law enforcement. (9)

These concerns are certainly legitimate. However, the truth of the matter is that the Census is completely safe. Online responses are immediately removed from the internet and stored in non-networked servers. All Census responses are protected with Pentagon-level encryption. (5)

Furthermore, personal data, like names and addresses, is never shared with anyone and is protected by law. It’s a felony for anyone to share your personal information from the census. All census data is stored as statistical information only.

So, a talking point for this group may look something like one of the following:

Your census responses are protected by law. It’s a felony for anyone to share your personal information from the census.” (5)



Barriers to Census Engagement

“Did you know that census data is encrypted with Pentagon-level security? It’s never been hacked.” (5)

“Census responses are only stored as statistics. No one will ever have access to your name and address.” (5)

People with this concern just want to feel safe. Use reassuring language to soothe their fears.

Demonstrating Impact

“I do not think the census has any impact on my life.”

This group may be ignorant of the importance of the census. Unfortunately, as we’ll discuss later, the hard to count populations that are most likely to not respond to the census are the same groups that are impacted by the census the most. (9)

Again, demonstrating exactly how the census benefits the local community will help boost responsiveness.

In addition to the community benefits messaging discussed earlier, another tactic is discussing specific funding in the community. In DuPage County, some talking points may look something like:

“Did you know that DuPage social service and government agencies received over \$4 million dollars in 2017 alone.” (4)

“Three DuPage cities are on the eligibility cusp for receiving additional government funds: Wheaton, Downers Grove, and Elmhurst.” (4)

“Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in DuPage county received \$16 million in funds in 2017 based on census data.” (4)



Barriers to Census Engagement

Speaking their language

“I have trouble completing census forms.”

People with this objection may not speak or be fluent in English. In order to meet this need, the census has provided resources in many different languages. (3)

The US Census Bureau will have online questionnaires translated in twelve languages other than English and will have telephone operators able to respond in those same languages (Spanish, Chinese - Mandarin and Cantonese, Vietnamese, Korean, Russian, Arabic, Tagalog, Polish, French, Haitian Creole, Portuguese, Japanese). In addition, written language guides from the U.S. Census Bureau are available in 59 languages. Interpreters trained by the DuPage Federation's Language Access Resource Center (LARC) are reviewing those guides for usability.

Five languages that are frequently spoken in our region – Urdu, Hindi, Gujarati, Burmese, and Nepali — will not have questionnaires or telephone operators available to them. The LARC is currently working to expand interpretation resources for those languages. (See Resource Section on Page 21 for the website).

A few pointers to communicating with non-fluent individuals:

- Speak clearly and slowly, but not necessarily louder, unless the person seems hard of hearing.
- Try to avoid talking down to the individual, as they may take offense. Try instead to meet them at their level of fluency. Use simple gestures, such as pointing or nodding.
- Be sure to make use of the language resources listed above.
- Reduce word count of communications and keep the words simple. (3)



Barriers to Census Engagement

Making the Time

“I do not have time to fill out the census forms.”

This group of people assumes that the census will be extremely time-consuming. In fact, the census is only a handful, very simple questions and only takes about ten minutes to finish. There are a plethora of ways to fill out the census, including by mail, over the phone, online, and in-person at local libraries and other community service centers (More on this in Pathways to Respond).

Talking Points:

“The Census only takes ten minutes and you can respond in the way that’s convenient to you.”

“You can finish the census now in ten minutes or you can waste more time later when a census worker comes in-person to your home.”

“It only takes ten minutes to fill out the census. You can set a timer if you like.”

These are the common concerns across all populations. In the next section, we will discuss barriers specific to the top HTC communities.



Who are the Hard to Count?

Historically, the following groups of people have been “hard to count” (or HTC for short), with high rates of unresponsiveness:

1. Low-income families and people experiencing homelessness
2. Families with children under age 5
3. Noncitizen immigrants
4. Ethnic Minority Groups
 - a. Latinx Americans
 - b. African Americans
 - c. Arab Americans

There is some overlap with barriers and messaging with the general population, but special consideration must be given to the specific concerns for each group. (12)



Just under 7% of DuPage County residents (67,682 people) live in poverty and 27,540 residents live in extreme poverty. (15) DuPage county is also home to many people experiencing homelessness. (15)

People experiencing homelessness are among the groups that are historically classified as “hard to count” by the census bureau and have been under counted for decades. (12) People experiencing homelessness may not have a permanent address, which makes it hard to track them down.

Many variables impact the response rates of this group. They include:

- Mistrust of the government
- Fear of losing government aid
- Mental illness and distress
- Confidentiality concerns

Talking points should be crafted around addressing these concerns.

The census provides guidance on how to spend federal funding for housing, nutrition, employment, and childcare programs, which directly affect the quality of life of those experiencing homelessness. (12)

Sample Messaging:

“Filling out the census won’t cause you to lose your government benefits. In fact, filling out the census might help yourself and others in the area receive more government funds.” (12)

“Census data is protected by Pentagon-level security. It’s against the law to give out your personal information from census data.” (5)

“The census is completely confidential. In fact, it is a felony to share any information given in the census.” (5)



“The information collected in the census is only stored as raw numbers and that data is not shared with law enforcement.” (5)

“The census helps determine funding for programs like SNAP, shelters, community centers, libraries, and housing assistance programs.”

What if they don't have a permanent address?

Since its inception in 1790, the Census Bureau has used the concept of “usual residence”, which is broadly defined as “the place where a person lives and sleeps most of the time”. (5) As such, there are several solutions to this issue:

- Use the address of a temporary residence, such as a friend or family member's home.
- Use the address of a shelter or community organization.

From March 30th through the first, the Census Bureau will count homeless populations at shelters, community organizations, and previously identified outdoor locations. This is known as Service-Based Enumeration. (16)

From April 9th to May 4th, the Bureau will count "people who are living in special locations such as recreational vehicle parks, campgrounds, racetracks, circuses, carnivals, marinas, hotels, and motels and who do not have a Usual Home Elsewhere." This is referred to as the Enumeration at Transitory Locations Operation. (16)



Families with young children

Parents of children under five often feel overwhelmed and strapped for time (among other resources).

Barriers to Counting:

- Perceived lack of time.
- Lack of childcare options.
- They “have more important things to worry about.”

Sample Messaging:

“The Census only takes 10 minutes and you can respond in a way that's convenient to you.”

“The census helps provide federal funding for schools, healthcare and public services for your children and the community at large.”

“Census data is critical to our children’s future and the next generation. It helps us get health care, transportation, schools, affordable housing, and higher education that our children need to get a good start and be successful.”



Non-citizen Immigrants

Given the amount of attention given to the proposed “Citizenship Question” earlier this year, special attention should be given to this category. Barriers for this group include:

- Fear of deportation.
- Fear of being put on a “list”.
- Feeling isolated and powerless.
- Not speaking English or not speaking fluently

Sample Messaging:

“The citizenship question was struck down by the supreme court. ”

“Did you know that census data is encrypted with Pentagon-level security? It’s never been hacked.” (5)

“The census helps provide federal funding for your community.” (1)

“Completing the Census is an act of resistance, and an opportunity to show our community’s power.” (2)

Working with translators, multilingual individuals, and language resources (whether through the Census or through the DuPage Federation's LARC or one of their partner organizations) will also be a vital tool in reaching this audience.



Latinx Americans

Last year the number of people apprehended by ICE was up by 68%. In the media, a climate of fear is pervasive in regards to Latinx populations. That fear is going to be a huge impediment to earning trust among this group.

Because of this, Latinx groups may be more afraid to answer the door, especially if ICE has been active in raids in the area. To counter that, encouraging folks to respond early, online, or over the phone will be an effective tool. It keeps enumerators from the door later on.

Barriers for this group:

- May feel targeted by the citizenship question hype
- May feel unsafe giving out their information to government officials
- Lack of English fluency among first-generation immigrants

Sample Messaging:

“The census helps provide federal funding for your community.” (1)

“Completing the Census is a form of activism, and an opportunity to show our community’s power.” (2)

“Fill out the census now and keep people from knocking on your door later.”



Asian Americans

Individuals in this group may need extra assurances about the removal of the citizenship question and the safety of their data. In addition, recently emigrated and first-generation families might need the extra support of language resources.

Different communities and demographics will respond differently to different messaging within Asian American populations. Knowing your audience will help you tailor your message in potent ways. (1)

Barriers:

- Not speaking English or lack of fluency. (1)
- Fear of the government.
- The Citizenship Question.

Sample Messaging:

“Census data is critical to our families’ future and the next generation. It helps us get the health care, transportation, schools, affordable housing, and higher education that our families need to get a good start and be successful.” (1)

“The 2010 Census shows that in one major city, the Asian American community had doubled in the previous ten years. This led to a 50 million dollar increase in federal dollars for schools, hospitals, and services for our kids. Filling out the Census can have real benefits for our community.” (1)



African Americans

Within African American communities, mistrust of the government runs deep. According to the Black Census Project, 52 percent of Black Census respondents say that politicians do not care about Black people, and an additional 35 percent assert that politicians only care a little. (8)

However, African Americans remain one of the most civically engaged populations when it comes to voting. (8) Black communities are keenly aware of the issues that they face as a community, and are willing to take action. But, confidentiality concerns and the fear of personal information being used to target them is a core concern and impediment to census engagement. (14)

Barriers:

- Complex household relationships. (9)
- Highly mobile populations and high numbers of renters. (9)
- Inadequate infrastructure. (9)
- Unjustly high incarceration rates.(9)

African American communities may also coincide with other hard to count groups, magnifying the challenge. They may be lower-income, have young children, and/or be part of a black Muslim community. (14)

Sticking with the key points of benefit to the community, claiming power for the community as well as seeking trusted messengers in the area are vital to this group. In addition, finding ways to connect the benefits of the census to the local community is also crucial.

In the recent Census Solutions workshop, LaTiyfa Fields of the Metro Mayors and Managers Association of DuPage county recommended “Just pick something they care about. Talking about potholes was effective in our outreach efforts.”

A community group in California advises turning the confidentiality concerns on their ear by emphasizing that responding to the census early means “that no one will knock on their door later”. (14)



Sample Messaging:

“The census helps secure community resources for affordable healthcare, housing, and work initiatives.”

“Being counted is an act of resistance and helps our community strive for a better future.”

“Fill out the census now and keep people from knocking on your door later.”



Arab Americans

According to ICIRR, nearly one-third of Arab Americans did not know about or plan on participating in the upcoming census. (14) Specific fears for this group revolve around being targeted for religious beliefs. The “Muslim Ban” and its repercussions weighs heavy on people’s minds. Some members of this group may be first-generation immigrants or non-citizens, so there may be some overlapping concerns, such as confidentiality.

Special assurances might need to be made to convey that the census does not ask about religion.

Barriers:

- Fear of being targeted for religious beliefs.
- Confidentiality concerns.
- Not speaking English or lack of fluency.(1)
- Fear of the government.
- Concerns regarding the “Muslim Ban”.

Sample Messaging:

“The census does not ask about religious affiliations.”

“The census helps provide federal funding for your community.” (1)

“Completing the Census is an act of resistance, and an opportunity to show our community’s power.” (2)

“Fill out the census now and keep people from knocking on your door later.”



Pathways to respond

In March of 2020, every address in the country will receive an invitation to complete the census. That invitation will contain three core ways to respond:

1. By going online.
2. By phone.
3. By mailing in a paper questionnaire.

Should the census bureau not receive a response, they will begin sending census takers (enumerators) in-person to non-responsive addresses in May.

In addition to these options, Libraries and other community organizations will offer computers with access to the online questionnaire, as well as the paper version.

Some creative ideas to boost self-reporting in your area include:

- A census info booth at indoor farmers markets, street fairs, 5Ks, and so forth. (3)
- Canvassing with paper questionnaires at popular grocery stores. (3)
- Hosting a block party or other special event to get out the word about the census. (3)

In addition, many of these options would benefit from having language support, for non-fluent and non-native English speakers (see the “Resources” section at the end of this document).



Sources

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3. Census Community Outreach Toolkit. The Office of Evaluation Sciences. <https://oes.gsa.gov/>
4. DuPage Federation - 2020 Census Infographic 09.30.2019
5. Confidentiality of the Census (English & Spanish). www.census.gov/privacy
6. Census Language Guides - <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/planning-management/language-resources/language-guides.html>
7. Language Access Resource Center - <https://www.dupagefederation.org/larc>
8. Black Census Project - <https://blackcensus.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Digital-More-Black-Than-Blue.pdf>
9. 2020 Census risks of Undercounting Black Populations - <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/following-long-history-2020-census-risks-undercounting-black-population>
10. Hard to Count Populations - <https://www.census2020now.org/faces-blog/2018/3/9/hard-to-count-populations>
11. Census 2020 - 30 second PSA - https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=bcE5wXH17Os&feature=emb_logo
12. People Experiencing Homelessness <http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/census/2020/People-Experiencing-Homelessness-HTC.pdf>
13. Overcoming Black Census Doubts <https://prospect.org/health/overcoming-black-doubts-census/>
14. CENSUS 2020: Messages for Arab American communities and tips for outreach, Brandon Lee, ICIRR
15. Impact DuPage - <https://www.impactdupage.org/>
16. [Counting people experiencing homelessness during the 2020 Census](#)



Resources

DuPage Federation on Human Services Reform -
<https://www.dupagefederation.org/>

Language Access Resource Center - <https://www.dupagefederation.org/larc>

Black Census Project <https://blackcensus.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Digital-More-Black-Than-Blue.pdf>

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights - <https://www.icirr.org/>

Community Resources

Kent Bridgeman—Professional Content Writer -
censussolutions@dupagefederation.org

Stephanie Foerster—Ensemble Media -
censussolutions@dupagefederation.org

Loaves and Fishes—Janet Derrick, VP of CARES Program & Joni Wiltz,
Director of Marketing

Illinois Muslim Civic Coalition—Reema Kamran, Executive Director & Co-
Founder

Metro Mayors and Managers — LaTiyfa Fields, Housing & Community
Development Fellow

AgeGuide - Gretchen Knowlton, Advocacy Specialist & Sue Henkel, Census
Outreach Worker

Census Bureau

Language Guides <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial-census/2020-census/planning-management/language-resources/language-guides.html>

Confidentiality of the Census (English & Spanish). www.census.gov/privacy

Sample Census Questionnaire: <https://www2.census.gov/programs-surveys/decennial/2020/technical-documentation/questionnaires-and-instructions/questionnaires/2020-informational-questionnaire.pdf>

